



## DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

# CONCEPTUAL PHASE REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

(NEW CONSTRUCTION, ALTERATIONS, AND RENOVATIONS)

CITY OF CHARLESTON

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & PRESERVATION

2 George Street, Third Floor    Charleston, South Carolina 29401    843-724-3765    Fax: 843-724-3772    [www.charleston-sc.gov](http://www.charleston-sc.gov)

As of January 5, 2026, **all** Board and Staff submittals regarding Conceptual, Preliminary, and Final Review for **Design Review Board (DRB)** projects **must** be submitted through the Customer Self-Service (CSS) Portal. **Submittals sent via email will no longer be accepted.** To submit, please visit the [CSS Portal](#) and navigate to **Plans → Design Review Board**. Submittals transmitted by email will be considered previews only and will not be accepted as formal approvals or as an official submission for a permit, Staff review, or Board review by the DRB.

### CONCEPTUAL REVIEW:

Review of the general height, scale, mass and 3-dimensional form of a building or an addition to an existing building, and the general architectural direction and quality of the project as it relates to its site, its neighborhood, and the City of Charleston. This phase defines the overall quality and architectural character of the project. A pre-conceptual submittal conference with the City Architect/DRB Administrative Officer may be required prior to Conceptual Review. Applicants are required to send via email to City staff the design concepts prior to submitting for conceptual review with the Board. Staff will notify the applicant with any revisions are needed and if a meeting is required, or if the applicant can move forward and submit plans for a conceptual review with the Board.

**General Information:** The Design Review Board (DRB) was established in 1999. As stated in the City of Charleston Zoning Ordinance, the purpose of the board is "to establish a review process that will protect and improve the visual and aesthetic character and economic value" of development within the City of Charleston. The DRB reviews new construction, exterior alterations, and signage for commercial or non-residential (more than eight multi-family units) projects where the property lies within the designated corridors (see DRB list of streets for jurisdiction). Projects that are less than 3000 square feet, with certain restrictions, may be reviewed at staff level and are not required to go before the board. Some projects are required to go before the full board, while others may be handled at staff level. Determination of the appropriate level of review will be made by the DRB Administrator.

**Board meetings** are held at 4:30 p.m. on the first Monday of each month, in-person at 2 George Street, Charleston, First Floor Public Meeting Room. Deadline for applications are Mondays at 12:00 noon, typically fourteen days prior to the meeting date. For meeting schedules, application forms, or additional information, please visit [www.charleston-sc.gov/drbo](http://www.charleston-sc.gov/drbo) or contact the City of Charleston's Urban Design & Preservation Division staff.

**Zoning Requirements:** Prior to DRB review, it is the responsibility of the applicant to determine if zoning approval is required with the City of Charleston Zoning Division.

**Neighborhoods:** It is strongly encouraged that all applicants meet with the relevant neighborhood association and any adjacent property owners prior to DRB submittal. Please see the Neighborhood Contacts information sheet for more information.

### SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS:

- If your project needs to go before the Technical Review Committee (TRC) and you are seeking any variances, you must have done this first before submitting to DRB. Variances require that you go before the Board of Zoning Appeals for your results and you must do this before submitting to DRB. (The outcome of BZA could affect your site plan and revisions may be needed before submitting to DRB.)
- Completed application form and fee.** (Please visit [www.charleston-sc.gov/drbo](http://www.charleston-sc.gov/drbo) for the application and fee schedule.) **Please note that as of January 2019, the fee schedule has changed and a fee is now required at every submittal.**
  - All materials in digital pdf format. (Board and staff review). When providing required PDFs of the drawing set, documents should be merged into a single file. The digital submittal should be named using the following naming system: Street address/Project name/Meeting date. Please compress the file before sending to DRB for review.
- Site plan and schematic landscape plan, to scale, depicting:**
  - Proposed layout of all structures (include north arrow, property lines and adjacent streets).
  - Proposed layout of all driveways, walkways, parking areas, entrance and exit drives, loading areas, walls, gates, mechanical equipment, trash enclosure, etc. with features labeled.
  - Existing building(s) adjacent to the property.

- Any demolition of existing site features, including trees.
- The site plan/landscape plans shall show the ground floor plan and how it relates to the site.
- A **Schematic** landscape plan.
- Include the floor plan on the landscape plans so that we can see the doors and windows in relation to the proposed plantings.
- Always define wet vs. dry detention ponds and plant with native grasses, etc. or other wet tolerant plants/trees.

□ **Architectural drawings**, to scale, depicting:

- Floor plans. (always include north arrow and graphic scale on all plans)
- Roof plan
- Building elevations (including notations regarding materials and dimensions). For new construction, each individual elevation should be depicted one or two to a page so that details and notes are of sufficient size for review.
- Label elevations according to compass orientation.
- Include documentation of existing grade/flood plain requirements where relevant.
- Where an addition to an existing building is proposed, provide existing plans and elevations noting any removal or alteration of existing building elements.
- For new construction, provide a Streetscape Elevation (drawn to scale) of buildings adjacent to and across the street from the site. The proposed new construction must be included in the streetscape for comparison.
- **Initial submittals should show existing and proposed conditions. For all subsequent submittals, architectural drawings should show the previous proposal, and the current proposal on the same page, side-by-side for comparison.**

□ **Include square footage of buildings as a note on the cover sheet and # of units if residential.**

□ **Plat of survey/Existing conditions plan to include topography, FEMA info and existing trees.**

□ **Photographs of existing site and structure** (if any). Also include photographs of surroundings sufficient to explain context. This includes, but is not limited to, buildings, signs, and site features. Include photos in the hard copy submittal, no smaller than 8.5" x 11". All photos submitted shall be of sufficient size and quality to allow for review of existing conditions.

□ **Color renderings and/or three-dimensional perspective drawings.**

□ Scale model (if required by the Board or City Architect).

□ If deferred or denied at Conceptual review and you are returning to Conceptual review more than once, please provide written responses as a separate pdf file, explaining how the previous Board and staff's comments were addressed and on what sheet.

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